

THE CRISIS OF THE UNINSURED

More than 45 million Americans have no health insurance and an additional 16 million have inadequate coverage. In Connecticut alone there are over 325,000 uninsured. More than 6 percent of children lack coverage. This is unacceptable. Now is the time to change this broken system and ensure affordable access to healthcare for everyone.

Healthcare coverage is becoming an expensive burden for families and businesses. Premiums are too high and the cost of a sick employee can be catastrophic to a small business. Good medical attention should not be a privilege in this country - it should be a right. So, we must work together to find a comprehensive solution. The federal government must provide a floor - the minimum insurance that someone may carry. And, businesses and personal wealth will create the ceiling.

Ultimately health insurance should be extended to every man, woman, and child in this country. But we must start by covering our children. One of the top priorities of the 110th Congress was a Children's Health Insurance bill or SCHIP that would expand coverage to millions of children who don't currently have it. Unfortunately, President Bush and Congressional Republicans turned a blind eye to the plight of our insured children. The President twice vetoed legislation that would have expanded the program. In the coming Congress we will again have an opportunity to expand children's health insurance. I hope you will all stand by my side in that fight.

Here are some bills that I supported in the 110th Congress that will help expand access to coverage for every American:

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Supporting state innovation in expanding coverage: I cosponsored H.R. 506, because I believe that in order to provide meaningful healthcare reform, we will need a strong partnership between states and the federal government. This bill would create a State Health Coverage Innovation Commission that would develop a set of recommendations based on proposals from the states to decrease the cost and improve access to quality healthcare.

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Expanding health coverage to children: I supported both H.R.3162 and H.R. 976 which would have increased the number of children eligible for SCHIP to 10 million.

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Extending equality in mental health and substance abuse treatment to millions: Mental health parity in group health plans was signed into law as a part of H.R. 1424. This bill will end discrimination against patients who seek treatment for mental health or substance abuse by prohibiting insurers from imposing harsher limits or restrictions on coverage than those placed on other types of treatment.

Here are some reports that provide more information about the crisis of the uninsured and expanding coverage:

The Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured: The Uninsured: A Primer

Connecticut Office of Legislative Research: Background: Health Care Coverage and the Uninsured in Connecticut

CRS Report: State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP): A Brief Overview

CRS Report: Mental Health Parity: An Overview

Here are statements I have made regarding these issues:

LARSON VOTES TO PRESERVE CHILDREN'S HEALTH CARE, IMPROVE MEDICARE

LARSON PRAISES WAYS AND MEANS PASSAGE OF CHILDREN'S HEALTH, MEDICARE BILL

Floor statement on H.R. 6983: PAUL WELLSTONE AND PETE DOMENICI MENTAL HEALTH PARITY AND ADDICTION EQUITY ACT OF 2008 -- (House of Representatives - September 23, 2008)